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2022 WC: RONALDO IN, SALAH OUT AS MORE TEAMS QUALIFY

Portugal beat North Macedonia to book spot for Qatar, but Egypt failed to win a penalty shootout against Senegal

27 OUT OF 32 TEAMS CONFIRM SPOTS

Away from Africa, where powerhouses Nigeria failed to qualify, and Europe, where 12 of the 13 sides are through, South America saw genuine upsets as both Chile and Colombia failed to advance. Ecuador will feature for only the third time ever. In North America, Canada will play for the first time since 1986. The WC draw and groupings will be held in Doha on Friday | P13



LASER DRAMA, CONTROVERSY IN SENEGAL

In the shootout in Senegal, fans flashed lasers to disturb Egypt's players. Salah's face was covered in green light. Egypt also allegedly faced racist abuse and have filed a complaint. The entirety of the qualifying process will finish in June. The World Cup is set to run from November 21 to December 18



22 THE WORLD CUP IN QATAR WILL BE THE 22ND EDITION OF THE QUADRENNIAL BASH

India to lead BIMSTEC security pillar

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

THE seven-nation BIMSTEC on Wednesday adopted an important charter and a connectivity road-map while entrusting India with the responsibility of helming its security pillar.

The charter was the biggest takeaway. "With the charter, BIMSTEC now has an international personality, it has an emblem, it has a flag, it has formally listed purpose and principles that it is going to adhere to and an architecture," said additional secretary BIMSTEC, Rudrendra Tandon.

The fifth summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) also approved a proposal to revamp its activities. "Henceforth, BIMSTEC cooperation activities will take place in seven pillars. Each pillar will be led by one of the member states. India will lead the security pillar," said Tandon.

The seven nations in BIMSTEC are India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It

brings together 1.5 billion people, which comprises 21% of the world population and a combined GDP of over \$2.5 trillion.

India has been making conscious efforts to make BIMSTEC a vibrant regional forum. It feels security and counter terrorism are issues that must be addressed collectively. "The recent developments in Europe have raised questions about the stability of the international order," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his address. He an-

nounced a \$1-million ad-hoc grant for the operational budget for the BIMSTEC secretariat and another \$3 million assistance to revive its centre for weather and climate.

The group finalised three documents to facilitate having a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, setting up a centre for technology transfer in Colombo and providing for co-operation among diplomatic academies of the member nations.

Modi spoke about the need to move forward the connectivity, disaster management, marine co-operation, economic integration and security agendas.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his address. He an-

State govt keen to increase quota beyond 50%, says Bommai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE state government is open to increasing the reservation to SC/STs and other backward classes and go beyond the limit of 50 per cent. The government is seeking a legal opinion to find out if there is a provision in the Indira Sahani verdict to increase the threshold of 50 per cent, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, some MLAs in the Assembly raised the issue of increasing the quota for SC/STs and other backward classes. Replying, the chief minister said there is a demand to increase the Scheduled Tribe quota to 7.5 per cent. Earlier when the state government tried a similar exercise, the quota exceeded the stipulated 50 per cent, and the Supreme Court had rejected it. Later, the Justice Nagamohan Committee was constituted to look into the issue. In 2020, the committee submitted its final report recommending an increase in the reservation for SCs from the existing 15 per cent to 17 per cent and for STs from 3 per cent to 7.5 per cent.

Bommai said that many organisations and communities are demanding a change in their quota status - from 2A to Schedule Tribe and from 3B to 2A. The Union government, too, has sought the opinion of various states in increasing the quota. "We have informed the Centre that as the population has increased, the quota too should go up beyond 50 per cent. The Nagamohan Das commission has also recommended it. We have constituted the Justice Subhash Adhikari Committee to look into demands of various organisations which have demanded a change in their quota status," Bommai said.

When Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah pointed out that the Indra Sawhney judgement had limited reservation to 50 per cent, Bommai said he has written to the advocate general to look into special circumstances, through which they can go over the 50 per cent threshold. The government has also asked the Justice Adhikari committee to submit an interim report. "We will place these proposals before the all-party meeting and take it forward. We want to go beyond 50 per cent reservation, but do it as per the Constitution. If needed, we will go to both Houses," he added.

STATE	DATE	FRESH CASES	RECOVERIES	DEATHS
NATIONWIDE	MAR 29	1,259	1,233	42
KARNATAKA	MAR 29	42	35	1

IMRAN'S FATE SEALED AS KEY ALLY BOLTS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

IMRAN Khan's ouster as Pakistan Prime Minister is now just a matter of formality with one more ally joining the ranks of the Opposition ahead of Sunday's no-confidence motion. Khan effectively lost majority in Parliament after the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), a key ally of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led coalition government, announced that it has parted ways with the government.

"We want to make a new beginning for politics of tolerance and true democracy," MQM-P chief Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said on Wednesday, adding, "I announce to support the Opposition in Parliament." MQM-P has seven MPs.

Another ally of the ruling coalition, the Balochistan Awami Party with five MPs, had already said it had "accepted the Opposi-

tion's invitation" to vote against Khan.

Seeing the writing on the wall, Khan cancelled his address to the nation that was scheduled to take place on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and Inter-Services Intelligence head Lt Gen. Nadeem Anjum met Khan and reportedly told him to quit or face the consequences.

In the 342-member lower house, Khan needs 172 votes to foil the Opposition's bid to topple him. Pakistan's Opposition parties have already claimed to have the support of 175 lawmakers.

Opposition leader and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president Shehbaz Sharif is tipped to be the next PM after removal of 69-year-old Khan.

Khan's PTI has 155 members in the National Assembly. At least two dozen lawmakers and allied parties are likely to vote against Khan on April 3.



MOB RAJ

Miscreants defacing the gate of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. The Aam Aadmi Party alleged the BJP was behind the vandalism. Later the Delhi police filed an FIR against unknown persons for the security breach | P11

Pawar card in play to head UPA

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

AMID Congress humiliation in the recent elections and nagging questions about its ability to lead the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) any longer, the NCP is aggressively pushing the candidature of its patriarch Sharad Pawar as the head of the front. The process gathered steam with Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Wednesday saying Pawar has the ability to bring all non-BJP parties together ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

At present, Congress president Sonia Gandhi is the UPA chairperson. The head of the grouping would automatically be its prime ministerial candidate, though Sonia gave it up in favour of Manmohan Singh.

The NCP's youth wing had in a recent meeting in Delhi adopted a resolution to make Sharad Pawar the chairperson of the UPA. The resolution significantly was passed in the presence of Pawar.



HIJAB IN EXAMS SEVEN TEACHERS SUSPENDED

The teachers in Gadag allowed some students to write the SSLC exam wearing hijab on Monday. An inquiry has been ordered after a video went viral on social media | P5

KCOCA court convicts 12, including Bananje Raja, in Nayak murder case

BALA CHAUNAN @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka Control of Organised Crimes Act (KCOCA) court in Belagavi on Wednesday convicted nine out of 12 accused, including the notorious underworld don Bananje Raja alias Rajendra Kumar (54), in a nine-year-old murder case of BJP leader RN Nayak at Ankola. This is the first conviction in a KCOCA case in Karnataka.

Nayak was murdered at the height of extortion racket in coastal Karnataka. Bananje was named as an accused in the case after the investigation revealed that he had made extortion calls to Nayak and the latter had refused to give



in. Bananje had allegedly hired the sharpshooters from Uttar Pradesh to execute the contract killing. He was arrested in Casa Blanca in February 2015 and extradited to India in August that year. He was brought to Karnataka by a police team led by then Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Law & Order, Pratap Reddy, and the present Tamil Nadu BJP leader and former IPS officer Annamalai, who was the investigating officer.

Reddy was the then inspector general of police, Western range when Nayak was murdered. He had supervised the investigation from the beginning. DG&IP Praveen Sood called the investigation "outstanding" and congratulated Reddy, the investigation, court monitoring and prosecution teams for their meticulous and scientific investigation in the high-profile murder case, which resulted in the conviction of the accused under the stringent Act.

Akash alias Vivek Kumar Upadhaya (A1) was shot dead by the security guard of Nayak and police constable Ramesh Gowda when he was trying to flee after the assassination.

CONTINUED ON P5

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